Backgrounder

B 12/991

Military Sealift Command

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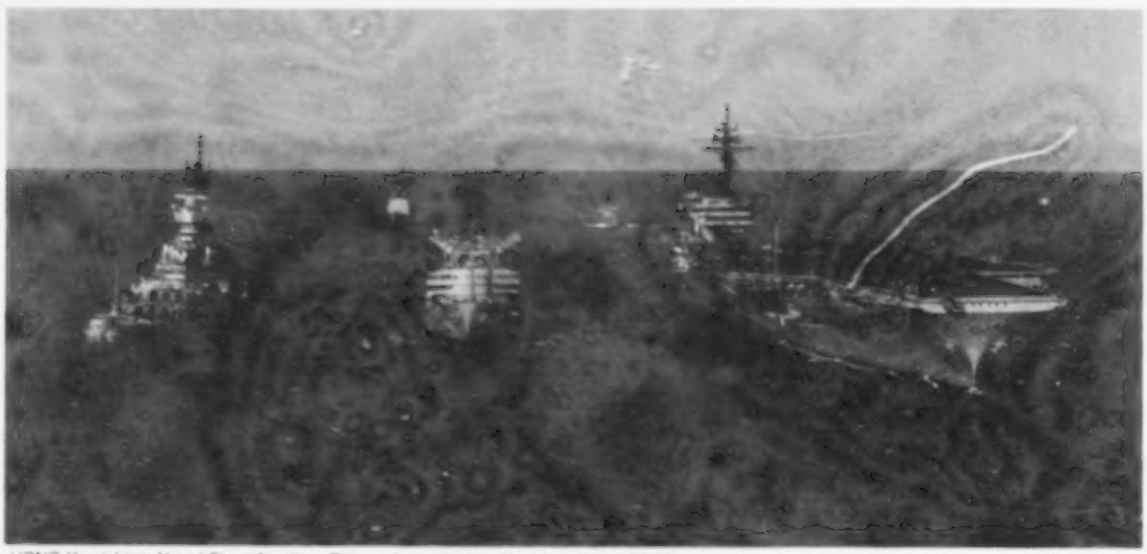


USNS Kawishiwi, Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force oiler, refueling the battleship USS Missouri to starboard and the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk to port

Mission

The military strategy of the United States is to deter aggression through a strong forward defense. In support of that strategy, the primary mission of the Military Sealift Command is to provide sea transportation to sustain U.S. forces worldwide.

The U.S. Navy's strategic sealift programs are intended to help convince potential enemies that we can react strongly and swiftly to aggression anywhere in the world. Should this strategy of deterrence fail, MSC's strategic sealift assets would be called upon to deploy forces quickly and sustain them in combat. Under such circumstances, sealift becomes the bedrock of U.S. military strategy because more than 95 percent of equipment and supplies needed to sustain a war effort must be carried by ship.

Cover: Maritime Prepositioning Ship, MV SGT William R. Button

History

During World War II, four separate government organizations controlled various aspects of sea transportation. In 1949, the Military Sea Transportation Service, now known as the Military Sealift Command, was established as the single agency for ocean transportation for the Department of Defense.

The importance of sealift was formally recognized in 1984 when the Secretary of the Navy established it as one of the Navy's major functions, giving it equal status today with the other three major functions—sea control, power projection and strategic deterrence.

Command Relationships

In October 1987, a unified transportation command, U.S. Transportation Command, was established to combine global common user air, land and sea transportation to deploy and sustain U.S. forces worldwide. Common user refers to assets used by more than one service. Components of the new command are MSC, the Army's Military Traffic Management Command and the Air Force's Military Airlift Command. In October 1988 MSC's common user sealift assets came under the combatant command, or overall authority, of USTRANSCOM. Operational control continues to rest with MSC, which continues to run sealift operations on a daily basis.

The Commander, Military Sealift Command, is under the administrative command of the Chief of Naval Operations, who in turn reports to the Secretary of the Navy. Ships in MSC's Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force and Special Mission Support Force are under the combatant command of a unified commander, such as Commander in Chief Atlantic or Commander in Chief Pacific. The unified commander, in turn, delegates operational control to the appropriate fleet commander in chief. A unified command carries out a broad continuing mission under a single commander and is made up of the assigned components of two or more services.

MSC's forces are integrated into the operational structure of the U.S. Navy's major fleets and their subordinate numbered fleets worldwide. The Commander MSC functions as a type commander, with administrative responsibilities for certain types of ships. Placing operational control of the Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force and Special Mission Support Force ships under the fleet commands affords them greater protection in wartime.

Ocean surveillance ship, USNS Worthy

Organization and Strength

MSC headquarters is in Washington, D.C., with area commands located in London, Yokohama, Bayonne, N.J., and Oakland, Calif. Sub-area commands are maintained in Naples, Italy; Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines, and Norfolk, Va.

MSC employs 6,000 civil service workers, including more than 4,000 civil service mariners afloat. MSC also has 1,000 military men and women assigned to it and 2,000 merchant mariners under contract—for a total of 9,000 people.

Navy Industrial Fund

MSC's worldwide operations are financed through the Navy Industrial Fund (NIF), a revolving fund established to provide working capital for industrial and commercial activities of the Navy. MSC earns revenue to cover its expenses by charging its sponsors for services. The primary difference between the industrial fund and commercial business is that the objective of the NIF is to break even rather than return a profit. MSC spends $1.5 billion a year in NIF funds to provide sealift services for the Department of Defense. During the period of Fiscal Years 1982-89 MSC's expenditures for the operation and maintenance of MSC ships totaled $13.4 billion.

MSC's Three Forces

MSC operates 130 ships in three separate forces—the Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force, Special Mission Support Force and Strategic Sealift Force.

The Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force provides direct support to Navy combatant ships at sea so they can remain on station with the fleet for long periods. This force includes oilers, ammunition ships, stores ships, surveillance ships and ocean tugs. Most Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force ships carry Navy detachments ranging from 4 to 67 personnel. The Navy detachments provide communications, coordinate supply operations, conduct helicopter operations and perform other duties in support of the mission but not directly related to operating the ship.

The Special Mission Support Force carries out a variety of highly specialized missions, including oceanographic research, missile tracking and cable laying and repairing.

The Strategic Sealift Force mission is to provide sea transportation to sustain military forces, wherever needed, through delivery of materials, petroleum products and other supplies. For its peacetime sealift mission MSC operates a privately-owned fleet of about 35 dry cargo ships and tankers under long-term contract. MSC's sealift assets also include 25 privately owned Afloat Prepositioning Force ships loaded with contingency equipment and supplies and strategically located around the world.

For day-to-day peacetime movement of Department of Defense materials and supplies, MSC administers contracts for sealift on regularly scheduled commercial ocean carriers.

Navy/Maritime Industry Relationship

While MSC has access to a surplus of sealift assets in peacetime, a contingency or war situation would drastically increase the Department of Defense demand for shipping. A strong American merchant marine has always been the backbone of our naval logistics force. However, a rapid decline of militarily useful ships in recent years has had an impact on the nation's sealift readiness. Due to new technology and economic forces, a worldwide

surplus of commercial ships now exists. Although the U.S. flag merchant marine has declined in numbers of ships, its carrying capacity is greater than 20 years ago, due to larger and faster ships and improved cargo handling.

During the 1960's a container revolution began affecting all transportation modes. Ocean shipping, taking advantage of the new technology, introduced container ships and specially designed terminals, cargo handling cranes, unit trains and tractor trailers to provide commercial shippers with rapid origin-to-destination transportation. But while containers are extremely efficient for commercial use, they are not easily adapted to military equipment. To make up the deficiency in available militarily useful ships in the event of war or contingency, the Navy took bold new initiatives to ensure the adequacy of sealift in wartime. Between 1982 and 1989 more than $7 billion for Navy sealift programs was spent.

Transition to War

All contingencies call for expanded sealift and manpower in varying degrees to ensure mission success. The sequence of transition from peace to war calls for a steady progression of increased levels of ships and manpower to a full mobilization. Full mobilization includes civil, government, and allied forces which would render a sealift force numbering more than 1,400 ships and over 46,000 men and women ashore and afloat. The strategic sealift mission divides easily into two categories: (1) Surge shipping after initial mobilization, and (2) resupply shipping to sustain our forces in combat. Surge shipping must be capable of handling outsized, bulky military unit equipment, while resupply shipping carries easily containerized supplies to meet daily consumption and build reserve stocks.

Because of the impact on containerization, the Navy has experienced a decline in surge capacity to deploy unit equipment, such as tanks, wheeled vehicles and helicopters which do not fit into containers.

Ready Reserve Force

The Ready Reserve Force provides a significant portion of the surge shipping capability immediately required to support the deployment of U.S. forces. The RRF is made up primarily of cargo ships

Afloat Prepositioning Force ship, MV American Cormorant

Crane ship, MV Keystone State

Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force oiler, USNS Henry J. Kaiser

Missile range instrumentation ship, USNS Observation Island

purchased from the commercial fleet. Although an active, privately owned merchant fleet is preferred, the types of ships in reserve status are not commercially viable and therefore far more costly in active status than in reserve. Now numbering 94 ships, the RRF is expected to increase to 142 ships by 1994. This reserve fleet also includes eight newly converted crane ships, specifically designed to discharge cargo at undeveloped or war-damaged ports lacking normal offloading capacity. By the end of 1992, the force will include 12 crane ships.

Ready Reserve Force ships generally are located at government reserve fleet sites or selected ports around the United States. The objective is to have the ships in a 5, 10 or 20-day readiness state. The force is administered and maintained by the Maritime Administration. When activated, RRF ships are controlled by MSC. A merchant marine reserve is being developed by the Maritime Administration to assure the crewing of these ships in an emergency.

Fast Sealift Ships

For the very rapid deployment of a mechanized Army division, the U.S. Navy purchased eight of the fastest cargo ships in the world and converted them for the rapid deployment of military surge equipment. The ships are almost as large as an aircraft carrier and can cruise at speeds of 33 knots. Each ship has two sets of twin cranes for loading and offloading where adequate port facilities are lacking. Vehicles can be driven on and off the ships on ramps. The squadron of eight ships can transport a mechanized Army division. A nucleus crew of nine maintains each ship, with 33 additional crew members coming aboard for activation. The ships,

aboard for activation. The ships, which are contract operated and crewed by U.S. merchant marine personnel, are activated periodically for exercises.

Sealift Enhancement

In order to make use of commercial ships in wartime, the Navy has acquired equipment such as seasheds and flatracks, which can be installed on container ships to enable them to carry outsized equipment.

Preposititoning

The successful employment of U.S. military forces depends on the ability to act quickly. Recognizing that hostilities can erupt at any time requiring the rapid deployment of military forces, the Afloat Prepositioning Force was established. The APF is made up of 25 ships loaded with military equipment and supplies and prepositioned in strategic locations.

Included as part of the APF, the Maritime Prepositioning Force consists of 13 ships divided into three squadrons. Each squadron is loaded with all the equipment and supplies— including fuel and water—required to support a U.S. Marine Corps Expeditionary Brigade of 16,500 troops for 30 days. These ships were especially converted for this mission. Also part of the Afloat Prepositioning Force are 12 cargo ships carrying mostly U.S. Army and Air Force equipment and supplies.

Maintained in a reduced operating status are two hospital ships, each containing a 1,000-bed treatment facility and 12 operating rooms, and two aviation logistics support ships, which when mobilized would render direct support to U.S. Marine Corps fixed wing and helicopter units.

Sealift programs, including the Ready Reserve Force and Fast Sealift Ships, give the Navy the capacity to lift approximately 80 percent of the unit equipment to meet the current one million-ton surge sealift goal.

Reserves

More than 85 percent of MSC's military manpower required for wartime is resident in reserve components. In wartime, MSC's peacetime force of 130 ships and 9,000 people would increase dramatically. To maximize readiness, MSC manages a naval reserve force that number more than 6,000 people, including five admirals. Included in the 6,000 are 2,300 in MSC reserve units, who mobilize to augment MSC offices around the world.

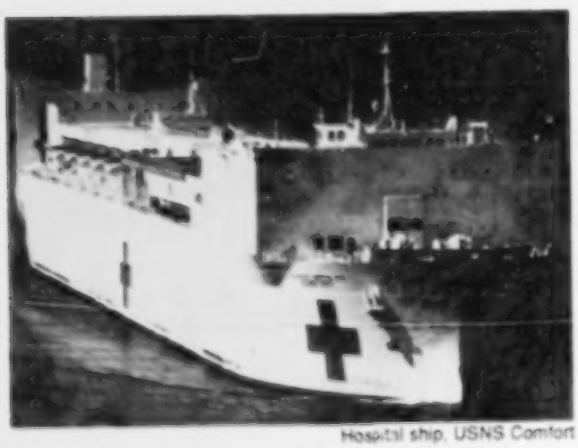
Also included are 3,800 reservists in the Naval Control of Shipping Organization. In mobilization they report to the fleet commanders in chief and are responsible for the safe movement of merchant ships, whether sailed independently or in convoy.

Looking Ahead

Wars and other emergencies during the last three decades, most recently the Falkland Islands and the Persian Gulf conflicts, have vividly demonstrated the necessity for defense readiness, including sealift capability.

The enhancement of the nation's strategic sealift capability is a continuing part of the MSC mission.

In addition to the conversion of crane ships, the Navy also embarked on a program to modernize MSC's fleet of oilers. Six of the new, large oilers were in the MSC



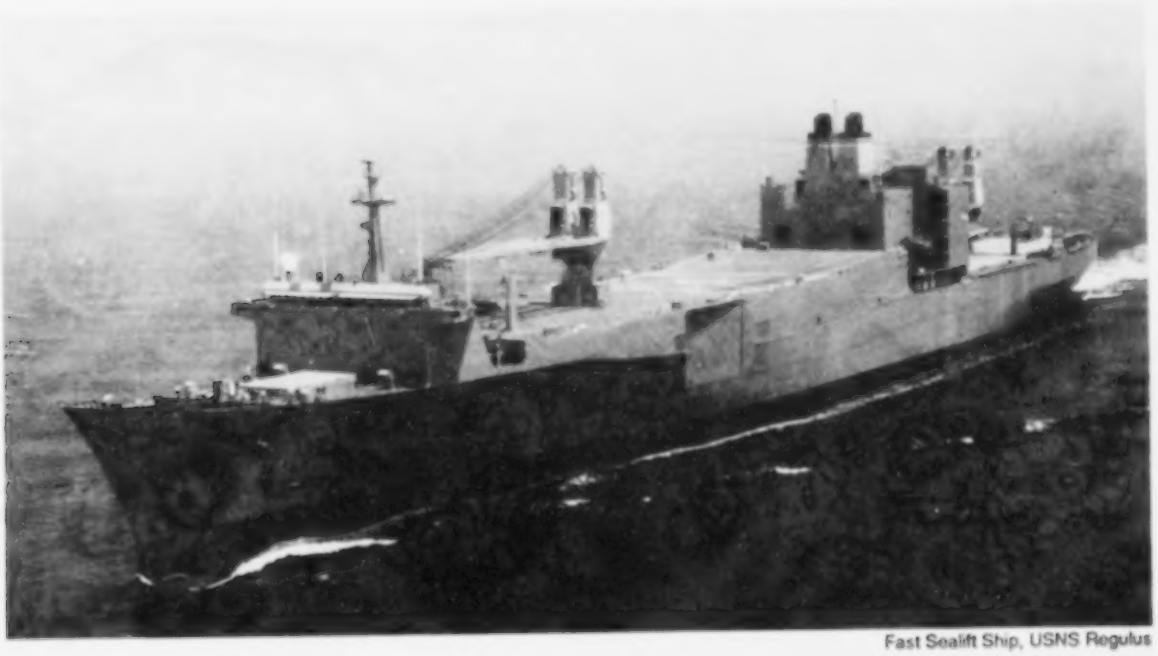
Hospital ship, USNS Comfort

Oceanographic survey ship, USNS Maury

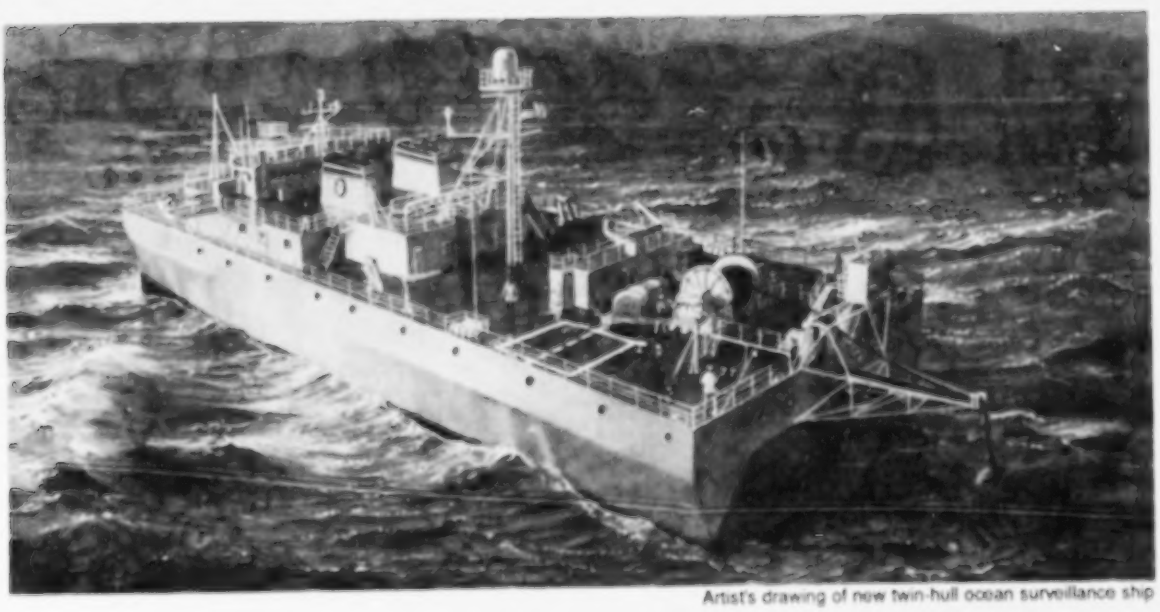
fleet by the end of FY 88. An additional 13 were projected to be operational by FY 95.

MSC's ocean surveillance ships also are undergoing growth and modernization, with this fleet expected to number 30 in four classes. Included would be a new, twin-hull ship specially designed for stable operations in the rough seas of the northern latitudes.

Meanwhile, the Military Sealift Command, with its active and ready available ships and its trained personnel, performs its sealift mission around the clock and around the globe, delivering goods to the armed forces in peacetime and ready to meet the requirements of a contingency or war.



Fast Sealift Ship, USNS Regulus



Artist's drawing of new twin-hull ocean surveillance ship

If you are interested in seagoing employment with MSC, write:

Headquarters - Military Sealift Command ● WNY Bldg. 210 ● Washington, D.C. 20398-5100

East Coast - Military Sealift Command Atlantic ● Bayonne, New Jersey 07002-5399

West Coast - Military Sealift Command Pacific ● Naval Supply Center ● Oakland, California 94625-5010

Or Call - Headquarters 202-433-5563

East Coast 201-823-6347

West Coast 415-302-6048

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